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ABSTRACT

Year-round programs allow students to enter and progress through school at their own pace, eliminate the long 3-month forgetting period, cut down on the number and duration of failures, reduce students' summer boredom, multiply students' job opportunities, and enhance the holding power of schools at the secondary level. These programs also make it possible to offer teachers the type and duration of employment best suited to their individual needs and preferences. Year-round programs can be designed to ensure that all children in a family will be on vacation at the same time, thus enhancing family vacation options rather than restricting them. Another beneficial side effect of a year-round school program is the reduction of summer vacation "people pressure." (Author/MLF)

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THE MANY FACES OF YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

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In its initial announcement of this conference the Virginia State Department of Education mailed a pamphlet to individuals and school districts, large and small, all over the nation. It bore the legend "Year-round Education--Who Needs It?" Upon opening the first fold you saw that they answered their own question with the bold statement, "You Do!"

My principal purpose today is to attempt to convince you of the absolute truth of that statement through a logical listing and explanation of the many "faces" or aspects of year-round education. In so doing I hope to present a sort of "wide-screen" view of year-round school that may help you to get more out of this seminar than you might if you looked at this subject with your blinders on.

It is unfortunate for our nation's educational program that even today so many professional schoolmen and laymen alike seem to regard year-round school with but a single major point of interest--its ability to free space and thus alleviate a shortage of classrooms. Perhaps this is so because almost without exception those districts now successfully involved in year-round programs were literally forced into the change by space problems. Listen to one school superintendent in Minnesota tell how his district became involved, and I quote his words exactly: "School administrators are just like everybody else. We don't do anything unless we're backed into a corner. I'm certain that if our bond referendum had passed we would never have developed such a successful year-round program for our district."

According to Dr. M. Gene Henderson, superintendent of Francis Howell School District, St. Charles, Missouri, their program at the now famous Becky-David School was dreamed up for the same reason as was the Hermanson-Gove 45/15 plan at Valley View, Lockport, Illinois. Stuart Beville, former superintendent of Prince William County, Virginia where the Dale City Schools have recently

been making educational history along with Leonard Servetter, assistant superintendent of the Chula Vista, California school system tell the same story. Need for space was the prime mover behind the Cherry Creek, Colorado Cunningham School opening its doors the year-round. And the same thing goes, in main part, for the progress in year-round education at superintendent Ray Spear's Northville, Michigan schools.

With this sort of prime motivation behind the move of most districts into year-round schooling it seems fair enough for one to pose this question: "If all we can expect from a year-round program is the immediate release of classroom space and the prospect of building fewer rooms in the future, while our district has no immediate space problem and few if any future classroom needs, why then is year-round education a desirable alternative for us?"

Let's attempt to find the answer to this question by examining the full extent of the educational strait-jacket we're all in together--a set of shackles stealthily and unconsciously imposed on us over the years by the rigidity of our aging, agrarian oriented 9-month school calendar--a sort of educational hoosegow, if you please, in which most of us seem quite comfortable but only because we've never known anything else.

Public education being the most important single enterprise of any community and the school activities being as pervasive as they are, it is reasonable to assume that they have either a direct or an indirect impact on almost every aspect of community life.

To bring this into focus, let's list those areas which quickly come to mind:

Students

Teachers

Administrators

Non-certificated school personnel

Parents

Religious institutions

Youth service organizations

Library services

Life style in general

Law enforcement

Industry with vested interests other than suppliers to the schools

Business and commerce in general

The medical profession

Suppliers to the schools

Architects and builders

Taxation

The school plant and grounds

Athletics and other extra curricular activities

Ecology and energy

Time will not permit our examining each of these "faces" or aspects of school calendar or timetable and its potential or actual impacts on the community. We'll select as many as possible and dismiss the others at this time with the suggestion that any district considering the implementation of a year-round program examine them <u>all</u> with the help of residents of the school district. Keep in mind that what may seem relatively unimportant to you may be "Mr. Everything" to someone else involved in one way or another. And sometimes these folks have a way of raining on your parade!

As a starter, let's take a fairly good look at the student and note how the school attendance pattern can work for or against him as the case may be. Students come in an almost bewildering variety of ages, sizes, shapes,

colors and widely differing family backgrounds, not to mention their varying degrees of readiness! In spite of this accepted fact our present school attendance pattern demands that they all be treated as though they were similar in every respect. The individuality of the child has gotten lost somewhere in the shuffle. For example, we decree by law that we will accept new students on only one day each year. This outdated, unfair procedure is the result of the inflexibility of the school attendance pattern. It is continued year after year primarily for the convenience of the system and not because it meets the real needs of the incoming students. By continuing this rigid requirement we severely discriminate against all those children in each year's crop of kids who were't born at the right time of the year. I must say that in this regard we nurture our livestock, our grains and other crops far more intelligently than we do our kids!

In marked contrast, the flexibility of most of the current, continuous year-round programs makes it possible to admit new, beginning students at least 3 or 4 times per year. I can foresee the day when we'll be able to go all the way and introduce youngsters to their public educational experience as soon as they are ready regardless of the time of year.

This single "face" of year-round school deserves much attention on the part of planners. It is one of the most important reasons why your district needs to make far better use of the calendar as an educational resource.

From the students' standpoint there are other areas where the 8 months "go" and 4 months "stop" program works against rather than for him. First, it provides for an inbuilt period of educational regression--the long summer shut-down, the 3 months period of forgetting. To compensate for this loss we must spend each fall upon the opening of school from 3 to 6 weeks or more in review of last year's work. Without sacrificing a single day of the student's present

vacation periods, the new programs through the proper sequencing of student attendance eliminate these long periods of forgetting and the consequent costly review.

Presently, if an elementary school student fails a grade he must generally repeat the entire year's work. This means not only severe damage to his ego and loss of self respect, but it also carries a high price tag in the matter of expense to the district. In North Carolina in the school year 1967-68 we spent over $5,000,000 to enable 10,000 first grade failures to repeat an entire year.

The new year-round programs, through changes in their time lines and resultant curriculum content, avoid in most cases the necessity for a failing child to repeat a full year's work. Rather, if he stumbles somewhere along the line there is an accounting every 45 school days or so. If he cannot make up his work during the 15 schoolday recess his classmates are having, then he simply does his 45 days work over at much less cost to him in lost self-esteem and far less cost to the district in dollars.

This new procedure also makes it less tempting for a teacher to pass a failing child thus compounding his problems and his future teachers problems farther down the stretch. The new programs do tend to reduce failure, and here's the clincher. Listen to what one experienced educator has to say about this. I refer to Dean Kilby, principal of the Miles Godwin Middle School of Dale City, Prince William County, Virginia. I quote: "Student interest is higher. We have found that many kids on their 3 week vacations want to come to school anyway. It's hard to believe, but it's true. Last year the Godwin School did not have one single 'retainee' (failure), not one, in a student body of 1500 kids."

Is it really good for children to be thrown on their own resources for three long months every summer? For some of the more priveleged kids, perhaps,

Their families' affluence provides the advantages of summer homes at the shore, the lake or in the mountains. Certainly a full summer so spent is both healthful and educational. So is a summer spent in large measure at an agency or privately operated summer camp. These benefits accrue only to the priveleged few. But how about the vast majority of American's school aged youth? Most of their families don't own second homes in resort or recreation areas. A great many of the millions of kids from central city schools hardly know what it is to go on a vacation because they've never done it. To them the long summer shut down of the schools represents 3 months of doing nothing in particular--3 months of boredom with its constant invitation to mischief and vandalism.

Both medical and psychiatric authorities tell us that regularly spaced breaks from one's chief occupation are better for both mind and body than one long break of the same total duration when considered on an annual basis. It would appear from experience with 45/15, for example, that the four 23 day vacations, one in each of the four seasons, plus the traditional breaks at Christmas and Easter, are actually better for students in the by and large than the customary long summer recess.

The present school calendar dictates that if school aged youth is to have any vacation job experience it must occur during the summer shutdown of our schools. This greatly limits the number of youngsters who can get jobs during their summer vacations. This is true for two reasons. First, the competition for the available jobs is terrific with all junior job seekers on the loose at the same time--several millions of them. Second, the summer months find most industries and businesses at their lowest ebb with fewer jobs available than at other seasons.

For those students who need and want vacation jobs, the year-round programs with a portion of school aged kids always available for employment are

the answer. In a recent issue of the Detroit, Michigan, NEWS, a heavily headlined story titled "One way to relieve summer jog shortage--year-round schools predicted for Detroit" the director of the Michigan Employment Security Commission, S. Martin Taylor, has this to say: "The summer job situation for Detroit area students will get worse before it gets better. But it will never get better until schools decide to stay open year-round. We estimate that there will be 210,000 high school and college students available for work this summer, in the Detroit area alone, most of whom will go jobless. Finding work for these youngsters would be a great deal easier if the schools would cooperate through year-round operation. It would even out the flow of young people into the labor market. We'd only have to cope with a quarter of them at any one time."

High school drop outs and course failures are a vexing and expensive problem in many districts. The Atlanta area year-round school plan, at the high school level, through its restructured and up-dated curriculum and full 4-quarter operation has gone a long way toward the solution of this problem according to Dr. Douglas G. MacRae, deputy superintendent of the Fulton County schools. Says Dr. MacRae: "In the Fulton County system the percentage of high school failures since the beginning of our program 4 years ago has dropped by about 40%. In terms of budget dollars this fact alone has saved the school district $400,000 per year!" Besides this consider, if you will, the amount of frustration and boredom that has been saved the students--no wonder the holding power of the high schools in the area has been greatly enhanced.

In leaving the student oriented aspect or face of year-round education, let's recap what we've seen. First, its flexibility greatly facilitates a more orderly and reasonable manner of introducing youth to school experiences. Second, it opens wide the door to individualized instruction with progess at the child's own pace through a more or less continuous process throughout the entire year.

Third, it can eliminate the long 3-month forgetting period and consequent time consuming and costly review period each fall. Fourth, it cuts down on the number of failures or retentions and greatly reduces the cost of failure--in both psychic damage to the child and financial cost to the district. Fifth, it reduces the temptation on the part of the teacher to pass on totally unprepared children to the next step in their education. Sixth, it tends to reduce students' summer boredom and consequent mischief and vandalism. Seventh, it multiplies job opportunities for vacationing students. Eighth and lastly, it greatly enhances the holding power of our schools at the secondary level.

If our present "stop and go" calendar has been unfair to students it has been equally unfriendly to the true professionalization of teaching. I think it can be easily demonstrated that the professional "face" or aspect of year-round school is a very constructive one. The present calendar denies full professional status to teaching, especially in the eyes of the general public which continues to regard this activity today as a rather well paid, part time job. Through year-round school teaching can become, at the option of the individual teacher, a full time, fully professionalized occupation on an absolute par with all the other professions such as law, medicine, engineering, etc. With such status it follows that teacher earning power can be greatly enhanced.

The flexibility of instructional contracts in year-round school programs makes it possible for the very first time in the history of education to offer the teacher the type and duration of employment best suited to the individual needs and preferences of each member of the staff. In the Valley View operation, for example, there are 52 different teacher contracts in use as against the single 9 month contract option previously offered. If 180 days of teaching is your dish, very well and good. If, on the other hand, a longer period of employment more nearly meets your financial aspirations you may elect

such a contract. If you are growing old in the ranks, nervous in the service, and a 9 month contract is proving too demanding, okay, select a shorter period to be in the classroom and still retain all rights of tenure and participation in your district's retirement program. If the lock-step intlexibility of the present procedure is both boring and nerve wracking, heed this comment by a veteran teacher in Valley View's 45/15 program: "If I find myself with a room full of kids who are simply driving me up the walls, I can relax with the comforting thought that its only a few weeks until I can have relief."

This new flexibility, if thoroughly understood, should appeal to the teacher, the administrator, the school board, the public and to youth in the process of choosing a profession. It should help to attract into teaching education's full share of America's bright eyed, bushy tailed, highly motivated and dollar conscious young people. As a final consideration, it seems to me at least that it may well bring more young men into elementary teaching where they are so desparately needed, especially in the central city schools where so many of the students, especially the boys, have been denied the continuing presense of an exemplary male figure in their formative years.

Whenever and wherever year-round education comes into focus and is discussed in the community it is the parents with kids in school who immediately generate the most static, throw up the most flak, and set off the fireworks! It consequently follows that if there are redeeming features of year-round school as far as parents are concerned they must be made quite clear at the outset. Immediate parental reaction to any change in the schools is apt to be unfavorable for the very reason that most of us resist change in any guise. A suggested change which appears, on the surface at least, to threaten established mores and life styles can be expected to raise some hackles!

Many parents are apt to resist the idea of year-round school because

of initial misconceptions. The very name, year-round school, implies that children would be required to languish in the classroom for 12 months each year. When we speak of sequencing or rotating attendance groups, parents with more than one child in school get nasty ideas of their kids all being on vacation at different times. Most parents are leary of having their kids experimented with or used as educational guinea pigs.

Parents are concerned about vacationing as a family group and fear year-round school may damage their chances of continuing this traditional and much anticipated custom. Where there are two wage earners in the family or where the family is broken and the mother is employed there is the immediate reaction that year-round school may reduce or eliminate the availability of qualified baby-sitters. Finally, many parents feel, at the outset at least, that if it costs "x" dollars to operate the schools for 9 months it will cost "x-plus" dollars to run them all year. This is distasteful as most parents feel their school tax dollars already take too much of their income.

All the foregoing fears can be allayed and doubts cleared up because the true "face" of year-round school as it applies to parents is really a most helpful one. It is only the "false face" of misconception that is really disturbing. Fact #1, no child is required to attend school for more days per year, 180, than at present.

Fact #2, all children in a family will be on vacation at the same time.

Fact #3, no children will be used as educational guinea pigs--we simply put known, tried and true methods to work within better "time lines".

Fact #4, family vacation options are greatly enhanced rather than restricted.

Fact #5, because there are always at least 25% of the community's

children on vacation at any one time, the availability of baby-sitters around the calendar is assured.

Fact #6, year-round school need not increase taxes but should, if the program is properly structured, tend to hold them in line or even reduce this portion of the financial burden of government. This has already been demonstrated in actual practice in Prince William County for example.

In conclusion of this phase of concern, when parents understand and accept the facts just mentioned and comprehend the child-oriented advantages and teacher benefits we discussed earlier they are inclined to go along with the proposal. Once they have gotten involved in a well thought through program and actually sensed its benefits, support is quick to manifest itself--even from the doubters! In the words of Dr. Ernest Mueller, of the Prince William County schools, "Try it, you'll like it"!

I have earlier suggested that year-round education has many faces. The three we've discussed in some detail, students, teachers and parents, seem so important, so much at the heart of any educational program that consideration of all the others must seem of secondary importance. This is true to a certain degree except that each one is of paramount interest to <u>some one</u> and therefore cannot be ignored.

The adoption of a year-round school program in any community has a beneficial effect on the community life in general because it tends to mark the beginning of a new rapport between the school administration and school board on the one hand and the patrons of the schools on the other. There are at least two other societal benefits that soon surface. One is the actual strengthening of the educational program. The other is the reduction of "people pressure" or "wall-to-wall" people on the highways, on the lakes and streams, in the national and state parks, at the resorts and in the restaurants and motels

during June, July and August, the traditional vacation months.

While the year-round school has its "administrative face", it is difficult to isolate great advantages that accrue to the administrators. It does, in fact, seem to create some additional problems for them, at least initially. It also abolishes the long summer period of relatively slack activity at the administrative level which many professional schoolmen find quite attractive and welcome. We can't get very far in any effort to justify an up-dating in the school calendar on the grounds that it reduces the administrative load.

There are some problems in the area of non-certificated personnel, also. I refer to our clerks, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc. Certainly where necessary most of these folks will be employed on a year-round, full time basis. However, with an immediately lower average daily attendance, some of these positions may be eliminated in the interests of efficient operation.

As to the aspect of year-round school which has an impact on the districts need for classroom space the end result is clear. Any well structured year-round program can be conducted in much less physical space than our traditional calendar requires. The amount of space saved depends on the type of program adopted. Space requirements for similar education programs on a year-round basis opposed to a 9 month activity are from 20 to 33 1/3% less. Substantial dollar savings in future capital funds are the result. Operating savings may also be realized by retiring rooms and even entire buildings from service. A room or building not built never has to be heated, lighted, air conditioned, cleaned and maintained nor rehabilitated! Some districts now planning and building schoolhouses like mad to keep up with student load will one day wake up and find themselves way overbuilt. Year-round operations can greatly reduce this hazard. Mature school discticts now losing students to the suburbs can retire many rooms from service and even close entire buildings

by moving into locally acceptable year-round programs.

That money can be saved and the educational program strengthened at one and the same time has now been demonstrated by both the Valley View, Illinois and Dale City, Virginia programs. These savings have been actually documented. The extent of the savings depend upon the type of program. A word of caution. If, in restructuring your operation, you add educational services and alternative offerings not presently incorporated in your program you are going to encounter higher costs than before, there are no two ways about it.

Both religious institutions and youth service organizations such as the "Y", the Scouts, Boys' Clubs, Junior Achievement will find it possible to make their work with youth more effective through the new educational time lines, where all youth are not either in or out of school at the same time.

Library services to students can be improved through the new attendance patterns because all the students are not researching the same subjects at the same time.

Juvenile delinquency can be more readily controlled by local law enforcement officers through new school attendance patterns and more effective work with youth by the church and the youth service organizations previously mentioned.

Business and industry with vested interests in year-round operation such as household goods movers, public utilities, travel and resort businesses, all stand to benefit by the elimination of summertime business peaks created by our "stop and go" calendar. Most other businesses as well as the medical and dental profession will benefit in a number of ways--a better year-round supply of junior employees is one. With high schools and eventually colleges graduating students throughout the year interviewing and employing these young people can be more effectively geared to the real employment needs of the firms involved.

General Motors needs for young engineers doesn't suddenly expand just because most students are graduating in May or June!

The work of architects, builders and suppliers to the schools will benefit as a direct result of levelling out the educational load. Book publishers, for example, will no longer have to have the whole year's book requirements ready for shipment at one time. Even the local dairy which supplies the cafeterias will find the business more attractive when it goes year-round. Much, much more could be said on this aspect of year-round school, but time will not permit.

Most of the faces of year-round school are friendly, a few are questionable and one or two we could do without. It will pay you to consider all of them for what they are actually worth to your own community. In the main, however, most districts now successfully engaged have found the proof of the pudding really <u>is</u> in the eating. I hope you enjoy your repast.